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Essays

Who is Afraid of Hebrew Children's Poetry, and Why, or, The Importance of Being Earnest about Cinderella

(Part 1)

Yair Mazor

"She taught the child to read, and taught so well,
That she herself, by teaching, learn'd to spell."
Byron (*Sketch*)

For historical, social, and aesthetic reasons, Hebrew children's literature had marked its first conspicuous achievements in relatively late historical-aesthetic stages (see early discussion). Hence, the most impressive corpus of Hebrew children's literature had started accumulating momentum upon the Zionist return to the land of Israel (Palestine) as well as upon the propelled revival of the Hebrew language, since the early decades of the twentieth century. A rather simplified, but no less valid portrayal of the emotional-intellectual-historical-social aura during those Zionist pioneering days in Palestine, simultaneously addresses two focuses of interest. On the one hand, the return from the Diaspora to the old-new homeland, the land of the glorious and mighty Jewish-Biblical past, inspired the newcomers to sculpt and establish a new type of Jew, a Jew who is redeemed of the Diaspora's Jew's weaknesses such as submissiveness, meekness, physical feebleness, and spiritual humbleness. Hence, the Zionist fervent dream was to form and shape a new type of Jew who is physically strong and assertive, mighty, and daring; a Jew who is deeply rooted in his homeland and is ardently ready to fight for it; a new Jew who will replace the physically frail Jew of the Diaspora with the admirable might and bravery of laudable Jewish figures from Jewish history such as the aggressive King David and Samson, or the adorable fighter Bar-Kochva (the legendary Jewish leader of the rebellion against the Romans in 132-135 A.D). Certainly, the national recollections of the Holocaust atrocities in which over six million helpless Jews were slaughtered like sheep by the Nazis further kindled, ignited, and prodded the ardent desire to establish and sculpt new Jews who bravely take their fate in their own hands and assertively respond to any sort of national danger. Also, the age long bloody conflict with Israel's Arab neighbors fortified the fervent wish on the part of the new Israelis to redeem themselves from the Diaspora's Jews' physical feebleness, while adopting ideals of military might and daring assertiveness. Hence, blatant, national determination inspired by slogans such as "no more pogroms," "no more persecutions," and "no more Holocaust" encouraged and goaded the new Israelis to replace the lamb with a lion in their new national portrait. In this respect, the new Israelis consciously chose to be both David and Goliath while replacing the past Jewish physical submissiveness with a new furious assertiveness.

On the other hand, however, the new Israelis have never felt comfortable with absolutely forsaking traditional Jewish values such as sensitive humanism, patient tolerance, and an ardent drive to pursue scholarship and advance education. The ultimate outcome of such a nationally self-imaged equation that simultaneously contains and cultivates conflicting proclivities, has conceived and produced considerable psychological confusion. The obstinate wish to marry King David's might and Samson's aggressiveness with the humane, compassionate, peaceful, and loving prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah indisputably leads to a self-contradictory image. Such a self-contradictory national image is plausibly displayed by the symbol of the "Sabra" (*Tzavar* [*Tzabar*]) which the new Israelis have attributed to the native-born Israelis. The Sabra is a cactus which is thorny and threatening on the surface, and sweet and mellow on the inside, and successfully expresses the self-contradictory image which the new Israelis have consciously and piously enlisted. The symbol of the Sabra is, therefore, not only a national statement on the part of the new Israelis, but also an educational model and message which they have desired to deliver to the offspring of the new Israeli generations. And since children's literature has never been devoid or divorced from an educational message, that conflicting national self image could not but invade many pieces of modern Hebrew children's literature.

Thus, who is afraid of Hebrew children's literature and why? Parents who don't feel comfortable with the assertive aspect of that educational aesthetic message, or parents who don't feel comfortable with the submissive aspect of that message, or parents who don' t feel comfortable with the self

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conflicting aspect of that message. I hereby advert to parents, and not to people in general, as parents are usually the adults who practice the access to children's literature in the capacity of those who buy children's literature on behalf of their offspring or read children's literature to their offspring, or guide and monitor their children's reading.

There is hereby no attempt whatsoever to establish, nor to support, the idea that the comprehensive corpus of Hebrew children's literature is predominately prevailed upon by the self-conflicting message involved in the Sabra concept that simultaneously expresses assertiveness and softness. The self-conflicting Sabra message in Hebrew children's literature is only one component in a stupendous and intricate ramified network of topics, themes, issues, and motifs. Furthermore, that self conflicting Sabra message is not as widespread in contemporary Hebrew children's literature as it was a few decades ago, when Israel's struggle for existence and independence was in its acute climax. However, the presence of the self-conflicting Sabra message in contemporary Hebrew children's literature has neither withered nor been extinguished, and its self-contradictory educational gospel which simultaneously advocates educational values that lack reciprocal congruency, also has not been entirely exiled from the Israeli collective consciousness.

Since the self conflicting concept of Sabra certainly is part of the values of Israeli society (although it has significantly decreased during the last two to three decades), it is more than likely that it will invade children's literature, one of the aesthetic seismographs of any society. That and more. The self-conflicting concept of Sabra, which simultaneously advocates contradictory values of assertiveness and sensitivity, becomes a most natural element on the part of children's literature which cultivates a conflicting gap between its "epidermic," surface layer (which communicates with the official reader of the text, the child), and its internal, latent layer (which communicates with the unofficial reader of the text, the adult). Thus, the poem in focus, *Dany the Hero* by Miriam Yelen-Stekelis cogently acts in the capacity of an elucidating case study which shows how society's conflicting values are both absorbed and reflected by one of society's most sensitive, aesthetic seismographs, children's literature. Relating to Zohar Shavit's[1] definition of an ambivalent model of children's literature, one may discern a dexterous execution of the ambivalent model in the poem under consideration. However, the poem utilizes and practices the ambivalent model in a remarkably unique fashion. While fastidiously cultivating an intricate stratum of poetics which may be challenged by a highbrow adult only, the poem neither denies nor deserts its official implied reader, the child.

The layer of the poem which addresses the child may be called the surface or the "epidermic" layer. The layer of the poem which addresses the adult, however, may be titled the internal or latent layer. Following this vein of consideration, one may relate to the poem in terminology of stratified structure which contains two types of structures: an upper structure that addresses the child and a deep structure (a term adopted from the generic transformative grammar) that addresses the adult. That and more. The deep structure of the poem is founded indeed upon two layers: beyond—or under—the latent layer, another hidden layer is evident and it may therefore be titled the cryptic layer. That cryptic layer is based on a Biblical allusion (Samson in the Book of Judges, chapters 13-15). Furthermore, that cryptic allusive layer is metaphorically bound to the latent layer due to a ramiform analogy between the two. Thus, the poem holds three layers: a surface layer, a latent layer, and a cryptic-allusive layer.

The surface layer, which is anchored in the poem's upper structure, addresses the child while the latent and the cryptic-allusive layers, which form together the poem's deep structure, address the highbrow adult. However, the poem's stratification structure is even more intricate. While the two layers of the deep structure of the poem—the latent and the cryptic—display a tight analogy, it drastically contradicts the upper structure of the poem on grounds of rhetoric and idea. In other words, the message delivered to the child by the upper structure is in dramatic conflict with the message conveyed to the highbrow adult through the deep structure. In light of this, one may portray the reciprocal relations between the upper and deep structure of the poem in the terminology of an oxymoron: one unit which simultaneously contains two components which are reciprocally contradicted. Hence, the poem's exercise of the ambivalent model earns a vertex of extremity. The following close reading of the poem aims to prove and rationalize the above. The comprehensive structure of the poem may be illustrated by a sketch, as follows:

Dany the Hero (Dany Gibbor)[2]

Mother said to me—Dany, My child is a hero and clever. My child will never cry Like a little fool.

I do not ever cry, I am not a crybaby. It is just the tears...the tears...they Cry by themselves.

I gave Nurit a flower – A little one, pretty and blue.
I gave Nurit an apple – I gave everything.

Nurit ate the apple, She threw the flower in the yard, She went to play with a boy, Another boy.

I do not ever cry. I am a hero, not a crybaby! But why, is it mother, why Do the tears cry by themselves?

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Essays

The Poem's Surface, "Epidermic" Layer.

The narrator of the poem is Dany. This rhetorical strategy conditions and dictates the cognitive nature of the surface, "epidermic" layer that is in congruency with the limits of the poem's official implied reader, the child. Accordingly, Dany, the child narrator and protagonist, naively responds to his mother's behaviorist model which expects him to be a hero and clever and, correspondingly, to avoid crying "like a little fool." Naturally, Dany does not wish to be "a little fool." He does wish, however, to be a hero, to be clever, to successfully obey his mother's behaviorist model and to meet her expectations. In other words, Dany desires to internalize his mother's behaviorist codex while avoiding any cognitive dissonance with his mother. A cognitive dissonance on Dany's part means a conflict between his mother's codex and expectations and his own capacity to obey and internalize that codex and to meet those expectations. That kind of cognitive dissonance, Dany of the poem's surface layer desperately wishes to avoid. Nevertheless, Dany's painful experience with Nurit caused him to deviate from his mother's model of decorum and expectations. Thus, while Dany reports the chronicles of that painful incident, he unconsciously enlists a powerful technique of psychological rhetoric with which he tries to soften the impression of his failure.

Dany opens and concludes his "incriminating confession" with declarations which simultaneously deny his weakness and obey his mother's behaviorist model and expectations: "I do not ever cry," and "I am a hero, not a crybaby." The points of beginning and concluding, in any kind of communication and discourse, possess an effective rhetorical-psychological impact. As Dany opens and concludes his "incriminating confession" with blatant statements which display a declarative obedience to his mother's behaviorist model and demanding expectations, he manages (from the child-reader's point of view) to soften his deviation from his mother's model, to decrease its magnitude, and to emphasize his principal capacity to meet his mother's expectations. The message which is delivered to the poem's official reader, the child, is therefore loud and clear: Dany is clever, is a hero and not a crybaby, despite his tears. Accordingly, Dany's tears are relatively insignificant and are nothing but a temporary display of weakness which neither undermines nor shutters Dany's evident capacity to live up to his mother's expectations. In other words, the poem's surface layer maintains that Dany has successfully internalized his mother's behaviorist codex. The case of his cry does not portend a cognitive dissonance on Dany's part, but rather an ephemeral, marginal incident which does not "evict" Dany, nor "dislodge" him from the safe haven of his mother's approval and appreciation. Certainly, from the child's standpoint, the separation between the tears and Dany, the denial of the causal connection between the two, fortifies the message of the surface layer of the poem that Dany is indeed a hero and clever, that Dany does obey his mother's behaviorist model, and meets her expectations, despite his temporary reaction to the encounter with Nurit. The division of the roles is also accordingly clear and evident: Nurit is "the bad guy" while Dany's mother is "the good guy." Nurit is the stumbling block on Dany's way to obey his mother's behaviorist model and to meet his mother's expectations. The mother is certainly "the good guy" on the surface layer of the poem: her behaviorist model seems right and worthy, and her expectations appropriate and in place. However, the latent layer of the poem, which addresses the highbrow adult, provides an encounter with a very different Dany and a very different mother.

The Poem's Latent Layer

What does change on the poem's latent layer? The narrator is still Dany, the mother still holds her behaviorist model as well as her demanding expectations. However, Dany's reaction to his mother's model and expectations change dramatically. The poem's surface layer aims to prove a congruency between Dany's behavior and personality and his mother's behaviorist model and expectations. Following this vein, the surface layer maintains Dany's tears are of a temporary, insignificant, and ephemeral nature and cast no shadow upon Dany's principal capacity to meet his mother's demanding expectations. Accordingly, the surface layer of the poem denies any cognitive dissonance[3] between Dany and his mother. Despite the tears, Dany fully internalizes his mother's behaviorist codex and neither he nor his mother have a reason to be upset or disappointed. The report of the latent layer, however, is dramatically different.

One may discern on the latent layer of the poem a daring attempt by Dany to pursue a process of individuation. Through this process, Dany individuates himself from his mother's behaviorist codex while realizing that the nature of his personality calls for a different behaviorist codex, one that deviates from his mother's. Dany is therefore exposed and introduced to a cognitive dissonance between himself and his mother, as there is a screening, or rather a gap between his mother's behaviorist model and expectations and his capacity to act accordingly. While tracing that psychological and emotional process on Dany's part, the highbrow adult reader encounters a Dany and mother who are evidently different from the Dany and mother of the poem's surface layer. The mother is not "the good guy," a laudable source of worthy self discipline, but rather "the bad guy," a parental figure who is not sufficiently sensitive to her son's vulnerable personality, an almost oppressive mother who forces upon her son a tough behaviorist model which does not fit him, while challenging him by too demanding expectations which he fails to fulfill. Dany of the latent level also differs from Dany of the surface layer. On the one hand, he still tries to appease his mother and to please her as he does on the surface layer. He still tries to overcome the cognitive dissonance that exiles him from the safe domain of

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his mother's approval and appreciation. After all, his self esteem greatly relies on his mother's appreciation.

On the other hand, however, Dany of the latent level realizes that his personality does not fit his mother's behaviorist model and her demanding expectations are beyond his capacity. The cognitive dissonance is too evident to avoid. Correspondingly, Dany is trapped by the conflict between his mother's expectations and his own faculties. Thus, he tries to extricate himself from his mother's oppressive model of behavior as well as to redeem himself from her too challenging expectations. Dany does not complete his process of individuation: such a process may be completed by a young adult only in many years to come. Also, Dany's "long journey" into exposing the real Dany, the self-conscious Dany, is not completed either, as one may easily expect. Dany's self awareness is probably more intuitive than verbally formulated. Nevertheless, on the psychological-emotional level, Dany of the latent level is much more daring and honest than Dany of the surface layer. He dares to admit that he is different from the way his mother desires to mold him in her "great expectations."

The opening stanza of the poem which exhibits Dany's mother's behaviorist model and her demanding expectations, may be read, in *prima vista*, as a principal decorum only. However, the following stanza reveals that parental decorum is not only principal, but also an immediate reaction to Dany's specific tears and crying. The transition from a solely principal decorum, or codex, into a specific reaction to a specific incident, underlines the demanding nature of that codex: it is quite clear that the codex in focus, the behaviorist model, and the demanding expectations which derive from it as a specific reaction to a specific cry, aims primarily to restrain the cry and to teach the child a moral lesson rather than comfort him. The fact that the mother raises the possibility of Dany as "a little fool," confirms, stresses, and fortifies the strict and stern nature of her immediate reaction: the mother does not offer compassion or comfort, but rather a demanding behaviorist model, and any deviation from it results in Dany being "a little fool." In light of this, there it is no wonder the mother converts her approach to Dany from a rhetoric of second person to a rhetoric of third person: "My child is," "My child will never." The third person rhetoric, which is the most formal and the most impersonal, suits well the strict and stern response of the mother to her child's cry. Thus, the poem's implied author (following W. Booth's term) enlists effective rhetorical devices to underline the harsh nature of the mother's behaviorist model as well as her demanding expectations. As already alluded to, Dany's reaction to his mother's demanding codex and expectations—on the poem's latent level—exposes a rejection while going through a process of individuation and increasing self-awareness. Again, Dany is probably not aware of this process on a verbal-cognitive level. His awareness is probably of an intuitive nature, of a proverbially formulated stage. Nevertheless, on the latent level of the poem, Dany's sense of discomfort in regard to his mother's stern behaviorist model and demanding expectations, is translated into a cognitive dissonance that reflects his increasing awareness of the gap between his personal faculties and his mother's behaviorist codex and expectations. One may formulate this psychological-emotional process in terminology of an individuation process through which Dany learns to individuate himself from his mother while cultivating an independent self-concept. That cognitive process of individuation and increasing self-awareness contains three stages.

a. At the first stage, Dany of the latent layer does not differ from Dany of the surface layer. He denies his cry altogether: "I do not ever cry." Only toward the end of the stanza, however, will the adult reader discover that Dany's denial is not only of a principal nature, but it relates as well to a specific incident, his upsetting encounter with Nurit. At this first stage, however, Dany's denial—which is indeed, a deliberate deviation from truth—expresses his strong desire to satisfy his mother's behaviorist model and expectations. The cognitive dissonance between him and his mother is still too hard to admit and the individuation (as well as individualization) process still calls for a breakthrough.

b. The second stage of the process in focus signifies the first crack in Dany's previous denial: "I am not a crybaby," he maintains. On the one hand, Dany does not yet admit his concrete cry and tears which resulted from his frustrating encounter with Nurit. On the other hand, however, he seems to withdraw from his previous absolute rhetoric. Furthermore, by arguing that he is not "a crybaby," Dany does not deny anymore that he "ever cried." He does maintain that he does not cry easily, but the notion of crying is no longer denied. Thus, one may understand Dany's statement, "I am not a crybaby," in the following fashion: although Dany argues that he does not cry easily, he no longer negates the legitimate option to cry when the magnitude of the reason for crying justifies crying. Of course, Dany does not possess the capacity to formulate his feeling in such a verbal fashion. However, it is safe to "decipher" Dany's statement in this way: "I am not a crybaby." Hence, Dany does make progress in his process of individuation and increase of self-awareness. He no longer pretends that he does not "ever cry." Indeed, he does not yet admit that he cried because of Nurit. Nevertheless, his statement endows the liberty to understand that a cry, which is not the cry of a crybaby, may be accepted under appropriate circumstances. Accordingly, Dany admits that there may be a cry of a "legitimate" nature and, correspondingly, he further admits that occasionally he does cry when circumstances justify such an emotional response upon his part. Even that slim crack in Dany's previous reaction to his mother's morals indicates progress in Dany's process of individuation. In contrast

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to his mother's behaviorist model, Dany seemingly argues that on his part, there are circumstances which allow a cry without the risk of being "a little fool." Dany's previous absolute obedience to his mother's stern model of behavior is not as evident as before. Dany realizes in his book, a cry is not an absolute negative. Dany recognizes the fact his own personality and emotional structure are not in full agreement with his mother's strict codex. The cognitive dissonance between Dany and his mother earns, for the first time in the poem, Dany's recognition, although a modest and hesitant one. One may define the process in focus as a gradual process of unearthing integrity. After his first denial of the cry, Dany's integrity does not allow him to stick too long to that deceiving denial. Correspondingly, Dany starts gradually withdrawing from his previous, deceitful denial towards exposing the truth. The truth is not only of a concrete nature, relating to Dany's cry. The truth is also of a psychological-emotional nature: the truth that Dany's psychological-emotional structure does not agree with his mother's behaviorist codex and expectations.

c. At the third stage of the process in focus, Dany converts his initial, deceitful denial (first stage) into a truthful confession: "It is just the tears...the tears...they/ Cry by themselves." Dany, who previously denied even a principal state of crying, is currently confessing his very concrete cry. Dany does make progress while shifting from the second stage of the process to the third one: not only does he admit a principal legitimate reason for crying (second stage), he admits his concrete, specific cry, which he had previously denied. Indeed, Dany attempts to transfer the guilt from himself to his tears. In other words, Dany admits to crying while trying to "redeem" himself from responsibility for crying. After all, he is still a child who wishes to appease his mother. After all, a full process of individuation, as well as a full recognition of a cognitive dissonance and its implications are certainly beyond the capacity of a young child. Therefore, whatever Dany realizes is mostly on an intuitive-emotional level, rather than on a rational and verbally formulated level. Nevertheless, Dany proves his integrity: as if his integrity cannot bear even that slight deviation from the truth, he decides to take responsibility for his tears. That responsibility is taken indirectly by Dany through his narrating the chronicles which resulted in and conceived his cry. Thus, instead of directly connecting between the cry and his responsibility for that cry, Dany adverts to the causal connection between the cry and himself.

A close reading of the following two stanzas (Nos. 3-4) which contain Dany's report of his painful encounter with Nurit, may illuminate two aspects of much importance to understanding his reaction to his mother's behaviorist codex and demanding expectations. First, what is the deep down meaning of that encounter—notably on Dany's part—and what poetic means (selection of themes, composition, and rhetoric) are enlisted to express that meaning? Second, what "doomed" Dany to fail in that encounter and why is he far from being eligible to meet both his mother's behaviorist model and expectations? Answering the last question reacquaints the adult reader with the difference between the poem's "two mothers:" the good mother of the surface layer who rightly challenges her son with a worthy model of behavior and the bad mother of the latent layer who is not sufficiently sensitive to her son's psychological- emotional portrait while forcing upon him a too demanding behaviorist model and expectations.

It is more than evident that Dany's attempt to approach Nurit does posses some erotic characteristics. One may debate upon the "profile," or the dosage of those erotic characteristics. Nevertheless, it is a given that sexuality is not limited to adults only and young children do express a sense of sexuality, notably in such encounters. The fact that in the encounter under consideration, the male (Dany) approaches the female (Nurit) with an apple—the ancient Biblical-traditional symbol of sexual temptation—and also with a flower (a traditional symbol of erotic courting) manifests and solidifies the erotic nature of that encounter. Furthermore, Nurit "betrays" Dany with another boy (which is repeated twice in such a "slim" stanza) with whom she plays. The verb "to play" (in Hebrew: *lesahek*) contains sexual connotations (in Biblical Hebrew, even sexual designations!)[4] which are conspicuously evident in Hebrew (in English as well). In light of this, Dany's disappointing experience with Nurit possesses erotic implications: his failure is erotic, not less than social.

Dany's failure is of a double nature in one more respect: he fails to meet the nature of Nurit's demands as he fails to meet the nature of his mother's demanding expectations. It is, however, Dany's very nature that proves a stumbling block on his way to earning Nurit's affection and his mother's appreciation. The following consideration of stanzas three and four, in which Dany reports his failure, both rationalizes and fortifies the fact that Dany is doomed to fail: the unbridgeable gulf between his nature and the nature of Nurit and his mother's codex and expectations does not permit a different outcome. As already alluded to, the act of giving a flower to a female by a male certainly holds erotic implications. Nevertheless, the act of giving an apple to a female by a male proves a more blatant and obtrusive erotic implication. Accumulative human history and tradition, initially inspired by the Bible, endow the apple—notably attached to a male-female encounter—with erotic characteristics which overshadow those associated with a flower.

In light of this, Dany's erotic stumble is marked by two elements, composition and selection. As to composition, Dany gives Nurit an apple only *after* he gives her a flower. Consequently, the act of giving an apple, the more erotic symbol (in

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comparison with a flower) is delayed, while the act of giving a flower, the less erotic symbol, is preambled. Thus, Dany displays a preference for the less erotic symbol (the flower) over the more erotic symbol (the apple). That preference by Dany is poetically manifested by composition, the order of presentation. Hence, from an erotic standpoint, Dany's preference to postpone and suspend the giving of the apple, the most evident erotic symbol, cannot contribute to his erotic approach. As to selection, Dany fails again to earn an erotic appeal. While he describes in much detail the flower, the weaker erotic symbol, he deprives the apple—the stronger erotic symbol—of any depiction whatsoever. While Dany bestows upon the flower three descriptive adjectives—small, pretty, and blue—he restrains and suspends his descriptive powers when it comes to the apple. The "descriptive austerity" which marks Dany's attitude to the apple becomes more blatantly evident as Dany even "robs" the apple of its most traditional and expected color, the color red. Furthermore, by bestowing upon the flower the color blue, Dany reduces its erotic potency as well. The color blue, as Cirlot points out, traditionally stands for a "rational atmosphere," for "thinking," "devotion," and "innocence." That and more. Cirlot maintains that the blue flower is "a legendary symbol of the impossible."[5]

Hence, all symbolic connotations associated with the color blue—notably the blue flower—drastically oppose sensual passion and sexual lust. Thus, by endowing the flower with the color blue, Dany further sterilizes it of its initial modest erotic potency. To sum it up, Dany's erotic failure in regard to his giving Nurit a flower and an apple is of a multiplied magnitude. First, he delays the apple giving and preambles the flower giving. Second, he deprives the apple of any description, while endowing the flower with a triple description. Third, he robs the apple even of its most traditional and expected color, the color red. Fourth, he endows the flower with a color which holds symbolic connotations and dislodges any erotic touch. In other words, Dany regretfully succeeds in "diluting" and thinning out the "erotic dosage" of both the apple and the flower. Dany's cumulative erotic errors—in both composition and selection—collect an unfortunate momentum: from an erotic standpoint, he cannot be more wrong.

(To be continued)

NOTES

1. Cf. Zohar Shavit, *Poetics of Children's Literature.* (Athens and London: Georgia University Press, 1986). Shavit's observation derives from the bisected rhetoric which she discerns in children's literature. Accordingly, any text of children's literature cultivates rhetoric which simultaneously addresses two different target audiences: the child who is the formal reader and the adult (who monitors the child's reading) who is the informal reader. These two rhetorical levels differ dramatically while displaying conflicting ideological proclivities.

2. Cf. Miriam Yelen-Stekelis, *Yesh li sod* (I Have a Secret), (Tel-Aviv: Devir, 1960). A brief discussion of this poem is included in the following book, in Hebrew: Miri Baruch and Maya Fruchtman, *Every Poem Has a Name* (Tel Aviv: Papyrus, 1982), pp. 56-58. I have already addressed this poem (from an aesthetic perspective only) in Yair Mazor, "Samson of Don and Dany the Hero". (in Hebrew), *Ma'gley Kerila,* Vol. 22 (1993), pp. 9-20.

3. About cognitive dissonance see among numerous studies:J.W. Brehm & A. R. Cohen, *Explorations in Cognitive Dissonance.* Wiley, New York, 1962; M. Deubch, R. M. Krauss and N. Rosenaci, "Dissonance or Defensiveness?" *Journal of Personality,* Vol. 30 (1962), pp. 16-28; J. L. Freedman, "Long-term Behavioral Effects of Cognitive Dissonance". *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology.* Vol. 1 (1965), pp. 145-155.

4. See, for instance, *Genesis* 21, 10: "And Sarah saw the son of Hagar of Egypt, whom she conceived with Abraham, playing..." (trans. by Y.M.) Accordingly, Ismael displays a sexual maturity and therefore, he threatens Isaac's priority. For this very reason, Sarah demands Abraham to send away both Hagar and Ismael. See also, Potiphar's wife's false complaint that Joseph attempted to take advantage of her: "A Hebrew man was brought to play with us and he came to lie with me and did I cry loudly" (*Genesis* 39, 14; trans. Y. M.).

Announcement

During the fall semester of 1996, I will be teaching a senior colloquium on contemporary Israeli politics. This undergraduate course is taught as a weekly seminar limited to 15 students with outstanding academic backgrounds. With this format, I will be able to try some innovative teaching techniques suitable to a smaller class. I would be grateful to hear from other members of the AIS about teaching ideas that are particularly suitable to this type of environment. Have you developed methods that work well and enhance the undergraduate experience? Are there interesting ways to make the research component even more valuable? How do you deal with students' limited backgrounds in a seminar setting? All suggestions are welcome and appreciated.

Please respond directly to:

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